he bombing of the maringapor a

-: From STEPHEN BARBER

WASHINGTON.

T seven o'clock on a brilliantily fine morning in June, 1954, the British freighter Springfjord (3,500 tons) was lying off the Pacific coast of 3, Guatemaia, about to discharge OP VARSO HI TOTTON INTO DARGES.

Suddenly a twin-boomed P 38 aircraft appeared and, without warning, dive-bombed the ship., The first bomb-a 500-pounder-landed on the deck a few feet from most of the crew but did not explode. Nor did the second. The third did. Miraculously, none of the crew was injured, but the ship was driven ashore and written off as a total loss.

To this day, not a penny of damages or compensation has been paid to the owners, the Springwell Shipping Company. All they have recovered is £180,000 from London underwriters for the loss of the hull, which was insured agninst war risk.

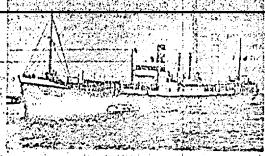
And yet the circumstances of the wholly unprovoked attack on Government action promised-all to no avail.

For seven years the chairman of the Springwell Company, Capt. . Peter Longton, struggled to obtain restitution. Inch he gave up-until last year, when, in a series of articles published by The Sunday Telegraph about the American Central Intelligence ship had been wrecked.

The story behind the affair this. In the early summer of 1954 it was decided in Washington that action must be taken to secure the overthrow of Guatemala's wing President, Jacob Arbenz. Guzman. There was reason to believe that arms from behind the Iron Curtain were on their way to the republic, and that plans were afoot to make it a full-fledged Communist state.

In view of the threat this posed to neighbouring Central American states, not to mention the Panama Canal, with all the strategic impli-1 cations this posed to America's defence, the C.I.A. was assigned the task of ousting Arbenz. Full support was therefore given to an American - trained exile, Col. Carlos Castillo-Armaz, to stage a coup d'état.

An "instant airforce" of warsurplus lighter-bombers operating. out of a base in El Salvador was duly furnished. American mer-cenaries flew these planes. One of thom. Jerry de Larm, carried out raids on the capital, knocking out. the Shell Compray's oil storage





depot outside the city. Another, Major Ferdinand Frederick Schupp, bombed the Springfjord.

As a whole, the coup was a success. Indeed American officials cite it as a highlight of the C.I.A.'s career.

VMr. Richard Bissell, then Director of Plans, who was later dismissed by President Kennedy after the Cuban invasion fiasco in 1963. openly admits this. Others have talked, too.

But the frankest account of the Springfjord raid was given by this unarmed and innocent ship Senor Rudolfo Mendoza, a ringare well known. Questions have leader in the Castillo-Armaz been asked in the House of adventure, who flew as Major Commons, diplomatic and other Schupp's wing-man on the fateful leader in the Castillo-Armaz adventure, who flew as Major Schupp's wing-man on the fateful day. He is now Director of Aviation in Guatemala.

Said he in a tele-recorded interview, which was granted an American broadcasting company but has never, intriguingly enough, been shown:

"O.K. So we had this news at Intelligence the base, that an English ship was Agency, ne at last learnt why his approaching bringing some planes ship had been wrecked.

for the Government. There was three Spitfires and pilots in it.

"So we said: 'The best thing to do is sink the ship.

"So we take on the ship with with three bombs. One was a 1,000-pounder, two were

"Schupp, in the first dive he ade at the ship, the bomb didn't explode but it made a big hole, it went right through. Same thing with the second bomb-went right through.

"Then I saw the crew-some got fast boats and got away. There was only one bomb left.

"Schupp dived in close to the ship and the bomb exploded. and blew some of the elevators off his airplane. . . ."

It turned out, of course, that the Springfjord was carrying no Spitfires. As a matter of fact, she was under time-charter to the American Grace Line and operating in the inter-American coastal trade for which she had been specially and expensively fitted oul.

Shortly after the incident the



Above: Capt. Peter Longton, owner of the Springfjord. the ship before and after the bombing.

Springwell company sent a British Q.C., Mr. Rafael Valls, to Guatemala City to discuss the case. Mr. Valls was cordially received by the President and invited to dinner at his palace. The next morning he was handed a letter at his hotel. ordering him to quit Guatemala by that evening.

Further efforts to obtain redress were no more successful. As Capt. Longton put it last week: "My associates and I were barking up the wrong tree. We tried to get restitution from the Guatemalans, but we should have been looking elsewhere.

As time went on, the amount in question grew. The claim—for loss of trading earnings, interest on the capital loss over 13 years, repatriation for the crew, insur-ance premiums, legal fees and the like, which was drawn up with the advice of the Board of Trade this amounted to over £1,100,000.

When, finally, Capt. Longton read The Sunday Telegraph's articles on the C.I.A., he immediately got in touch with Lamorte, Burns

Burns wrote back to say that the law firm of Cichanowski & Callan had been in touch with the C.I.A. and the U.S. State Department in Washington, and were prepared to handle the claim on the basis of a 30 per cent. cut of the proceeds for themselves.

The idea of paying roughly a million dollars to an American firm to obtain restitution from the American Government did not greatly amuse Capt. Longton.

Last month he flew to Wash-ington, where he learnt that the files on the case had been passed by Mr. Lawrence Houston, the General Counsel for the C.I.A., to the State Department. appointment was arranged for him with Mr. Ernest Kerley, Assistant Legal Director, International Claims, at the State Department.

At this interview Capt. Longton told the American official that he did not wish to make an unseemly fuss or embarrass an ally, but that he did want the story looked into. He submitted a folio of his firm's claim.

Then, having heard nothing for three weeks, he sought a second meeting, which was granted. At this he was informed by Mr. Kerley that, while U.S. responsibility was not explicitly denied, he, Capt. Longton, would have to produce "affidavit proof" that the incident had taken place.

In the meantime, on Capt. Longton's behalf. I had questioned Richard Bissell, who is today working for the United Aircraft Company of East Hartford, Coninecticut.

Mr. Bissell agreed that in recent television interview he had referred to the Guatemalan coup, which had been under his opera-tional control, but he hedged on the subject of the Springfjord.

"In the interview I referred to an incident that certainly went beyond the limits of established policy," he said. "I do not know referred to the Springfjord. think other people have con-nected the two up.

& Co., his firm's representatives. "As you probably know, she in New York, asking them to look was sunk by a bomb from a into the matter again. Earnorth 6 Castillo-Armas aircraft. I think "As you probably know, she

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